

Ask President Obama to Hold Off on Decision

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) were joined by other members of Congress today in asking the State Department inspector general to investigate whether conflicts of interest tainted the process for reviewing a proposed crude oil pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

In a separate letter to President Barack Obama, Sanders, Welch and a dozen other senators and congressmen cited “serious concerns” about the integrity of the review and asked the White House to withhold any decision on the project until the inspector general’s investigation is completed, made public and evaluated.

TransCanada, the company proposing the Keystone XL pipeline project, reportedly was allowed to screen private firms competing to perform an environmental impact study on the pipeline. Cardno Entrix, the politically-connected firm ultimately selected to conduct the environmental impact study, had significant financial ties to TransCanada.

“Given the significant economic, environmental, and public health implications of the proposed pipeline, we believe that it is critical that the State Department conduct thorough, unbiased reviews of the project,” the lawmakers wrote to Inspector General Harold W. Geisel.

Their letter posed a series of detailed questions designed to determine whether the selection of the firm and the environmental review process was “free of actual or apparent conflicts of interest.”

The 1,700-mile pipeline would carry more than half a million barrels of oil a day from Canada’s tar sands to refineries in Texas. The State Department is reviewing the proposal because the pipeline would cross the international border between the United States and Canada.

To read the letter to the Department of State inspector general’s office, click [here](#) .

To read the letter the President Obama, click [here](#) .